Toda

1; Rivers
231, 233, 825

[See category 234 for complete information about Toda buffaloes]

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

his dairy the *palol* always turns to the left, so that he faces north-east as he goes towards his buffaloes. In a few dairies the door faces directly west, and, according to Breeks, this is the case at the conical dairy of Anto. 343

THE TODA BUFFALO

The Toda buffalo is a variety of the Indian water-buffalo, but the life on the hills seems to have produced a much finer animal than that of the plains. Although thoroughly under the control of the Todas, the buffaloes are semi-wild and often attack people of a different race from their owners, and Europeans have frequently been severely injured by the onslaught of these animals. 136 231 234 825

The Toda name for the male buffalo is *er*, and for the female *ir*, but either term may be used when the people speak of buffaloes collectively. Calves have different designations at different ages. A young calf is *kar*, one from one to two years of age is *pol*, and a three-year-old calf is *nakh*.

Defective buffaloes, and especially those with only one horn, are called *kwadrir*, and those whose horns bend downwards are *kughir*. Barren buffaloes are called *maiir*.

There are considerable differences of colour among the buffaloes. Those much lighter than the rest are called *nerir* or *pushtir*, and there is a legend about the origin of these buffaloes, which, however, I failed to obtain. The only obvious way in which the animals differ from one another in marking is that some have a black stripe running down either side of the neck very much in the position which would be occupied by the chain suspending a bell.

There do not seem to be any physical differences between the buffaloes of different classes, and, as we shall see shortly, the nature of the breeding of the Toda buffaloes is such as would have entirely destroyed any distinctions of the kind if they had ever existed.

Every adult female buffalo has an individual name, which is usually given when her first calf is born. The number of buffalo names is limited, so that many buffaloes bear the same name. 234 552

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02)1906 Toda

174 to the Nilgiris, and the extensive slaughter of sambhar which
262 followed it, that the Todas have thought of eating the flesh of
this animal, and as no prohibition against the eating of its
825 flesh has been handed down to them, they have no reluctance
in satisfying in this way the liking for animal food which the *erkumptthpimi* ceremony keeps in existence, if it does not actually stimulate it.

231 *The Cat.*—This animal, which is called *koti* or *kwoti*, is
825 domesticated by the Todas. The cat is mentioned in the legend of the tiger recorded in this section, and the earliest writers on the Todas speak of them as keeping these animals. I have seen them on the walls of the dairies, and believe that they are allowed to go wherever they please. The only occasion on which they come into ceremonial is at the *erkumptthpimi* sacrifice, where the spleen is specially put aside to be given to the cat, and is on this account called *kwotinerüf*.

The dog occurs in the story of Kwoten and several other animals are mentioned in the prayers and incantations, chiefly as sources of danger to the buffaloes. In the incantation for the relief of headache given on p. 265, the names of many animals are uttered, probably with the intention that their heads may acquire the pain which is being charmed away from the head of the sufferer.

Trees and Plants

778 The most sacred tree of the Todas is undoubtedly the *tudr*
824 (Fig. 58). This name is given by the Todas to two species, *Meliosma pungens* and *M. wightii*, the two trees resembling one another closely.

The bark is largely used in the dairy ceremonial, and especially in the ordination ceremonies of the *palol* and other dairymen drawn from the Teivaliol and Melgarsol. Its use is especially connected with the people of these sections of the Toda community, but the rest of the Tartharol undergo a ceremony at the second funeral in which *tudr* is used, and this was said to have the purpose that every Toda should be purified with *tudr* before he enters on the future life.

A log and leaves of *tudr* are also used in the ceremony of

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782

[For the association of buffaloes with Toda funeral rites, see category 116, pp. 174-185.]

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAND.

Todas a pastoral Race—Definition of a Nomad—Todas migrate, but are not nomadic—The Mand or Village—Construction of Houses—Interior Arrangement of Houses—The surrounding Wall—The Cattle-pen—The Dairy or Pálthchi—Typical Plan of a Mand—Selection of Village Sites—Names of Villages.

CHAP. VI.

THE TODAS are a purely pastoral race; occupying themselves almost entirely in the bucolic pursuit of herding buffalos, of which they are in possession of a very fine species. They keep no other description of animals, save cats—Kotti.

As they do not attempt cultivation of the soil, they have rather hastily been styled nomads. Taking that term to imply a tribe which, *without fixed place of residence*, wanders in quest of food—whether that be game or pasture for its cattle—the word is a misnomer as applied to the Todas.

Indeed, from the many primitive races found in various parts of the world, which with striking deficiency of development in the organs of Acquisitiveness, Constructiveness, Order, and Number, are also distinguished by the peculiarity, common to them all, of not tilling the soil, we may select links of a complete gradation in idle mode of life; from the lowest, or ever-wandering predatory class which lives by begging and theft: through several varieties of the nomadic shepherd and hunter: up to the *settled* pastoral races, amongst which we class the Todas; who, with a very strong bias in favour of a permanent home, *yet migrate* once a year, compelled

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

to do so, simply in order by change of pasture, to obtain a sufficiency of food for the cattle, on whose milk they almost entirely subsist.

I make free to assert that no tribe of people, having the organ of Concentrativeness so largely and so uniformly developed as it is with the Todas, will ever be found to be habitual wanderers. Whether it be, that in the early days of the human race, circumstances having forced a family of man to become nomadic, the form of its skull gradually changed in the course of many generations, so as to adapt the man's disposition to his necessities; or if, on the contrary, the wandering habit be largely the result of defective size of that faculty; certain it is, that practice and corresponding cranial form are now in harmony, and that a small development of Concentrativeness will be found ever accompanied by a centrifugal tendency; attachment to a settled home being strong in proportion to the organ's volume, strong even to the extent of producing nostalgia when thwarted, if associated with remembrances of home and landscape.

Toda families reside in permanent villages—Mand or Madd—having each a certain tract of grazing ground surrounding it. Each minor division of the family has a house —Ársh—in the Mand, and a share of the village land.

Nearly every Mand, however, has its duplicate, sometimes its triplicate, to which the entire body of the inhabitants migrate at certain seasons of the year, both for the sake of fresh pasturage and with the view of escaping the inclemency of situations which become exposed to the west-monsoon rain and wind.

These storms drive at times with such intense severity over the wilds, that although at the time, the actual thermal state may be far from low, yet the evaporation induced by the extreme violence of the rain is known to lower the temperature of the body so as frequently to cause death to man and beast. Wild animals cower during these storms under

CHAP. VIII.

224 the processes for driving game known throughout India. No idea of defence appears to have been entertained, or of obstruction, brighter than that of making the doors of their houses so small, that to enter them they must crouch, and crawl through the openings on all fours. No mode of catching game, more skilful than is implied in the beating the wild-dogs off the prey they have hunted down and are worrying, is known to them.

231 Had the Todas felt any disposition to add to the varieties of their food, or to increase the amount of their animal stock, or to indulge in meat diet, the surrounding country at once afforded them precedents and examples of people who had domesticated cows, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry. Some exception might have been taken by them to the introduction of cows and sheep on pasture land which the august buffalo alone, should be permitted to enjoy: yet, as they narrate, they have brought home young bison, hoping to tame them, though failing in their attempt to do so. But fowls, pigs, and goats would have kept entirely to the woods adjoining the villages.

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BELL-GODS.

A religion based on the care of the Cow—Milk a Divine fluid—The Cattle-bell, a God—The Bell-cow—Her ancestral line—The Bell-god—Installation of the Bell-cow—The Tiriĕri—The sacred Herd—Bulls of the Herd—Sanctification of Bulls—Agnate law amongst the Todas; Female succession for their Cattle—Antiquity of Bell-gods.

CHAP. XIII.

NOTHING amongst the peculiarities of this very peculiar people is more striking than the absorbing importance they attach to all duties connected with the management of the buffalo and her chief product. The animal is the focus of all village life; the nucleus or centre upon which their entire religio-social system is based. One cannot imagine the Toda apart from a consideration of his buffalo; and when we reflect how entirely dependent the man is upon the animal—how, with only a light and pleasant expenditure of patience and perseverance, he finds the coarse grass of his hills turned into good nutriment; the care of the buffalo, so far from appearing anything extraordinary, only fits into its natural place as a necessary sequence. We are reminded, too, that the milk-giver and the bull have been, and still are, objects of especial care and of worship amongst other races that own Western Asia as their cradle-land. It also carries us back to the time when man depended upon his flocks and herds for existence. We actually see him in process of forming a religion, based upon the care of the cow.

'Few,' writes Mr. Tylor, 'who will give their minds to master the general principles of savage religion, will ever again

4: King G-5 (no date) 1870 AW60 Toda AW60

that used by the natives of South Africa. All vegetable food, except the wild fruits which they gather themselves, such as yellow blackberries, wild plums, the hill-gooseberry,* or cherry, as some call it, is obtained from the Vadacas, as already explained. This consists generally of green pulse, barley, millet, and other seeds, which it is the women's duty to winnow and grind, performing the latter operation between two roughly formed circular stones, the lower one fixed, and the upper revolving on it, similar to the ancient querns of Great Britain. It is singular that, though so attached to their buffaloes, the Todas keep no other domestic animal, not even the ubiquitous dog, the companion of man in every quarter of the globe from the polar regions to the equator. I never once saw or heard of a dog in any of their *munds*. This peculiarity, by the way, was specially remarked as a distinguishing trait in the history of the people of the European Drift period; and the dislike, and even abhorrence, evinced towards that animal by the ancient Jews is well known.

I should have mentioned that the Toda tribe is divided into two classes—the sacred, and what may be called for want of a better term the lay. The latter and more numerous class are called *Khootas*, whilst the former are known as the *Terrallees*. These appear to stand in regard to the rest of the community somewhat as did the Levites of old to the children of Israel, as it is from among them alone that the priests can be elected. No marriage can by Toda law take place between these two classes, though it is now sometimes evaded, and the breach winked at. Moreover, a priest, so long as he holds that office, cannot marry, and must keep aloof from all others, excepting those who, like himself, are invested with the sacred character. In order to qualify for this, however, he has to undergo certain initiatory ceremonies and trials, such as long fasting, sleeping in the forest, naked and alone, for several nights in succession; the danger from wild beasts, and the endurance of the chill night-air of these elevated regions, being deemed sufficiently severe tests of his fitness for the office. When fully appointed, the chief priests are distinguished by a different dress from their *confrères*. The subordinate priests, or coadjutors, whose native title, like the

* *Physalis edulis*, a plant about twelve to eighteen inches high, bearing bladder-like pods, enclosing a round yellow fruit, about the size of a common gooseberry, of a very agreeable subacid flavour.

4: King G-5 (no date) 1870 AW60 Toda AW60

766 the whole were clad in clean, white, soft-looking mantles, and wore ear-rings and necklaces of gold and silver. A plaintive monotonous wail was sustained while each man arriving passed before and bowed towards the dead man's ashes.

766 All the males, except one or two grey-headed old patriarchs
541 who sat with great dignity a little aside, now danced together in
●231 a circle holding hands, the Khota musicians accompanying them
782 with tom-toms and pipes. ½ When this was concluded half-a-dozen young men, evidently selected for their strength and activity, came forward, each carrying a long heavy club made of dark wood and pointed at the thicker end. Having thrown off the usual mantle, they stood in a kind of kilt of thick white cloth, having a red border round the lower edge, or skirt, the upper part of their bodies, as well as the legs, being bare. In this picturesque and most becoming costume they looked exceedingly handsome fellows, models as they were of muscular symmetry. At once advancing towards the cattle enclosure, with all the women and children running after them in the greatest excitement, these combatants leaped in among the buffaloes, the crowd instantly closing round and completely covering the wall, each endeavouring to get as good a view as possible of the coming spectacle.

The buffaloes were, as may be supposed, alarmed by these unusual proceedings, and their alarm became all the greater when the clubmen dancing wildly in their midst commenced striking them with their clubs. When their panic was at its height the men, watching their opportunity, sprang two together on the necks of three of the largest animals simultaneously, seizing them by the horns and nostrils and endeavouring to bear them to the ground, and affix a collar and bell round their necks. This bell is of the kind usually worn by one or more animals in every herd when grazing, and is of the ancient four-sided form, made of a single plate of metal and roughly riveted.

Marvellous was the agility displayed by these gladiators, as we may term them, in avoiding the savage thrusts of the huge sharp-pointed horns and in getting in behind them on to the animal's neck, wrestling in desperate strife as they were borne here and there among the trampling feet, now dashed against the wall, now on the ground.

To escape unhurt in such a combat was impossible, and it was

½ [Second funeral rites -- Analyst]

4: King G-5 (no date) 1870 AU60 Toda AU60

not long before we saw one of the men receive a dangerous wound in the neck from the thrust of a horn, which ripped open a wide gash from the collar-bone to the ear. He at once became an object of the greatest solicitude among the women, and was led away as a hero to the small tent, where he received every care and attention at their gentle hands.

As, one after another, fresh animals were attacked and borne to the ground with terrific struggles, those already belled and liberated turned on the common enemy, angrily tossing their formidable horns and butting so savagely that, had it not been for the extreme quickness and coolness of these men, some of them must have been killed. Their clubs now swung round and aloft with greater rapidity, and the heavy blows fell thicker and faster, the loud shouts and excited gestures of the male spectators, the exulting *Hau, hau* of the combatants, the weeping and occasional shrieks of the women, the stamping and rushing in the arena, the bellowing of the buffaloes, whose nostrils were covered with blood and foam, and the circling clouds of dust half-hiding the writhing mass, formed a whole more easily pictured in the mind than in words. A bag of the deceased's ashes was now laid at the entrance to the kraal, and the high priest, taking a handful or two of earth, threw some of it on the ashes, and some into the kraal amongst the buffaloes. One of these lay dead in the enclosure, and the rest were one by one led, or rather dragged out to their final doom, struggling violently, and plunging right and left in vain endeavours to escape from their brawny captors, who still clung to their necks. Forced up to a post fixed in the ground, at the foot of which lay the robe, ornaments, and ashes brought from the temple, the battered, bleeding animals were at length despatched there by the high priest's sacrificial axe as an offering to the dead.

Though the women had beheld with interest and excitement the torture of these unfortunate brutes, they now exhibited the greatest grief at their death, sitting and kneeling round the carcases with clasped hands and streaming eyes, addressing them in the most affectionate terms, as "Are you happy?" "Is it well with you?"

The mourners, male and female, next drew near to each other in couples, the man putting out first the right foot and then the left towards the woman he approached, who, dropping on one

To 618 423 231 595 778

and an inferior clan which serves the Thartars, known as Teivil. They have no landed property like the Tibetans, but are herdsmen and have large herds of buffalo, some of which are sacred. In this case, therefore, we do not find the polyandry grouped around landed property which is not supposed to be divided. The Todas only practise fraternal polyandry, and when I asked them if they practised non-fraternal polyandry, as in the case of the *magpa* marriage among the Tibetans, they were very shocked. They thought it was a very immoral idea that two men, not being brothers, could have one wife in common.

To 133 341

The country in which these Todas live is not barren like Tibet. On the contrary, they live in a very wooded area. Part of the present Todas actually live on a golf course, because British troops have quarters in this area and the officers have set up a sporting club which includes part of the Toda territory. The houses are very small, built only for protection, and radically different from any native construction which their neighbors have. I do not know where they got this architectural style, and nobody has been able to trace its origin. There is a rather tiny door through which one has to bend to enter. The house is all thatched, very well built, and quite snug inside. The front is made of boards, and there is a wall around for protection.

To 291 144 142 302

Men and women alike are dressed in long, flowing, white robes, with red and black stripes on them. They are of an obviously Indian type, rather good-looking. Some of them have progressive ideas to the extent of wearing spectacles, because they are either far- or short-sighted. They are quite good physical specimens of humanity, the color of their skin being dark brown and their hair jet black. The men are very hairy. Some of them wear turbans, but usually they go about bare-headed, showing a rich growth of black hair which they all have, young and old. I wondered if they had a secret formula for hair-dressing but they do not seem to

12:Emeneau L-5 (1935-1938)1941 AW60 Toda AW60

The giving of cloths in various Toda ceremonies was compared with cloth-giving ceremonies in Malabar. It will be found, however, as Rivers recognized,[10] that giving of cloths, both in marriage ceremonies and otherwise, is very general throughout India. No stress should be laid on this detail until and unless further investigations of other Indian communities warrant it. So also with the breaking of pots at funerals; it is not confined to the Todas and the Malabar coast.

The use of poles and boxes at funerals, of cowries, and of leaf-umbrellas, all of these being obtained from Malabar, is hardly more than the use of trade-objects, and is probably to be regarded as an example of diffusion of comparatively unessential material objects. The place of origin does not matter in the case of the cowries and the umbrellas; they have now been replaced by glass beads and European-type umbrellas respectively. It is doubtful whether the place of origin has any significance in the case of the other objects.

The Toda munds at Gudalur are well known in tradition as recent foundations; they have now been abandoned. The origin of some sacred buffaloes in the Wynaad, i.e. the same general area between the Nilgiris and Malabar, is paralleled by the origin of other sacred buffaloes on the Coimbatore, i.e. the Tamilian, plains on the other side of the Nilgiris.

It is evident then that the Malabar origin for the Todas and their customs favored by Rivers is untenable.[11] The Toda matrilineal sibs, which were unknown to Rivers, could have been used by him to bolster up his hypothesis, but it would have proved to be of no more value than his other evidence. It is clear that the general South Indian situation sketched above provides a sufficient basis for the Toda developments. The South Indian exogamous patrilineal sib has retained full vigor among the Todas. The exogamous tendencies of the matrilineal line which work in varying degrees in all South Indian communities have been developed among the Todas into full-fledged exogamous matrilineal sibs, probably on the model of the patrilineal sibs and facilitated by the small size of the tribe. We have here nothing more than an isolated local development, easily derivable from a general cultural feature of South India. The resemblance to the Malabar matrilineal communities is only superficial, for there the patrilineal units, if they originally existed, have been entirely superseded by the matrilineal units.

[10] Rivers, p. 700.

[11] Rivers also toyed with Coorg as a source for Toda customs, basing this partly on linguistic, partly on ethnological grounds. It may be mentioned here that the polyandry alleged for the Coorgs, if it ever existed, seems to have left no trace either verbally or in relic-institutions, so far as I was able to discover in eight months of linguistic work in Coorg. The linguistic grounds given by Rivers (p. 114) for Toda knowledge of the Coorgs are incorrect. The Todas call the plains at the foot of the Nilgiris, i.e. to the south, east, and northeast, kīṇg. This is etymologically connected with Kota kogg in the same meaning, Tamil koṅku "the Tamil country comprising the districts of Coimbatore, Salem, and a portion of Mysore," in effect the same area as that meant by the Toda and Kota words, Kannada koggu with the same meaning as the Tamil word, Malayalam koṅgu (no dictionary is accessible for the meaning). Rivers understood at least one instance of the Toda word as being equivalent to the English word Coorg. This is impossible. "Coorg" represents the Kannada koḍagu, which cannot be connected with Toda kīṇg and its cognates. The Todas have no knowledge of the Coorg country or of its inhabitants.

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

571 621 With this money, each individual recipient kept the following members of the family:

Pads: Silidz, Kupidz, Narjilkh and Kuddhue, when the latter is not working elsewhere as a priest (in which case the *mad* where he is employed feeds and clothes him).

Mutnarsh: Erzigwuf, Pershrörsh, Pengelam, Sodup, Sodam, Peterozn, Karnoz and Nalsirwuf.

Munbokwutn: gives the money he earns to his father Pads.

Singud: Odzel, Singarsh and Amoniwuf.

Pilkhlivowutn: Motsod, Izam, Kirsharshwutn and Närshmali.

Pufvkiaroz: Mutmali only.

422 [23] The Melgarsh *mad* owned twenty-seven buffaloes and three baby calves when I was with them in 1949. These were distributed as follows:

17 ordinary (*putir*) buffaloes and one baby calf.

10 sacred (*postir* or *parshashir*) buffaloes and three baby calves.

These belonged to the following as set out below:

1. Singarsh and Singud (in common; this was also the case when they each had a wife and it is, therefore, not linked to their present polyandrous marriage): 6 buffaloes and 1 calf (2 *postir*, 2 *putir*, 2 grown *putir* calves and 1 small *putir* male (*er*) calf).

2. Purshwuö (absentee from Melgarsh, living at Karsh with his wife; his buffaloes are, however, at Melgarsh): 4 buffaloes (1 *postir*, 1 large *postir er* calf and 2 *putir*).

3. Pads: 14 buffaloes and 2 small calves (7 *putir*, 4 *putir* female (*ir*) calves, 1 *postir ir* calf, 2 *postir er* calves, 1 baby *postir er* calf).

4. Mutnarsh, Kuddhue and Munbokwutn (held in common): 3 buffaloes and one calf (3 *postir*, 1 baby *postir ir* calf).

425 Karnoz used to own eight buffaloes, but after two years of married life with Nalsirwuf, he decided to get rid of most of them in favour of the younger men. He thus kept only two (which are now at Kakhwurkh in the care of relative there) and gave the others as follows: three to his sons (the ones shown above, and held jointly by them), two to Singarsh and Singud, and the remaining one to his father-in-law, the father of Nalsirwuf.

425 428 In acting thus, Karnoz was actually forestalling the disposal of his property before his death, as is the practice with most Todas. Should a man die without doing this, his wealth goes jointly to his sons. Should he have no issue, it will be handed to his brothers or to the sons of the latter. Girls can never inherit; all they can hope to get is a dowry from their deceased parents' property, which the heirs should pay to them at [562] [583] the time of their wedding.